

*JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE*  
JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL



The FATA/NWFP Dilemma; Defining United States Policy for Long Term  
Stability on the Afghanistan/Pakistan Border.

By

Van J. Voorhees, Jr.  
Colonel, USA

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This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes. (or appropriate statement per the Academic Integrity Policy)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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## ABSTRACT

During the 9-11 Commission Report, a question was asked to American and foreign government officials, as well as military officers on the front lines fighting terrorists. The question was “if you were a terrorist leader today, where would you locate your base?” The number one answer given was western Pakistan and the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region. It should be no surprise then that this border region, known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), is the current base for al Qaeda and Islamic extremism. A failure of the United States and its allies to engage the region with a coherent long-term policy, strategic goals and objectives will result in the FATA/NWFP becoming the long-term “center of gravity” for al Qaeda and Islamic fundamentalist extremism. The Obama administration is facing the most complex set of National Security issues in recent history. These issues range from a daunting economic crisis, rising unemployment, health care reforms, and having the burden of fighting two counterinsurgency (COIN) conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. All of these issues require well-defined national policy and a focused strategy integrating all elements of national power and a whole-of-government approach.

Since 9-11, the United States has not clarified its vision to deny the extremists safe havens in the FATA/NWFP region. The result is a very dangerous situation that threatens the entire region. Through neglect, the United States enables this fertile breeding ground to grow and prosper, allowing al Qaeda freedom of action, and enabling the educational goals and spread of radical Islamic fundamentalist doctrine throughout the region.

This thesis demonstrates through case studies how the United States, its allies, the United Nations, and the International Community unwittingly enabled, and later successfully denied al Qaeda center's of gravity in the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia. However, to date, they have failed in their efforts to do the same for the current fight in the FATA/NWFP. From this analysis, recommendations follow for the development and support to long-term policy and strategic goals that deny al Qaeda the center of gravity they seek in the FATA/NWFP.

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## INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 12 of the final 9-11 Commission Report to Congress, the question asked to American and foreign government officials, as well as military officers on the front lines fighting terrorists was “if you were a terrorist leader today, where would you locate your base?” The number one answer was western Pakistan and the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region.<sup>1</sup> It should be no surprise then that this region known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) is the current base for al Qaeda and Islamic extremism. A failure of the United States and its Allies to engage the region with a coherent long-term policy, strategic goals and objectives will result in the FATA/NWFP becoming the long-term “center of gravity” for al Qaeda and Islamic fundamental extremism.

The Obama administration is facing the most complex set of National Security and domestic issues in recent history. These issues range from a daunting economic crisis, rising unemployment, health care reforms, and having the burden of fighting two counterinsurgency (COIN) conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. All of these issues require well-defined national policy and a focused strategy integrating all elements of power and a whole-of-government approach. Examining the state of the FATA/NWFP region today, the only solution to denying al Qaeda and Islamic extremists a sanctuary and a center of

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1. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9-11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: Norton, 2004), 366.

gravity requires an effective whole-of-government approach integrating all elements of national power.

Since 9-11, the United States has not clarified its vision to deny the extremists safe havens in the FATA/NWFP region. The result is a very dangerous situation that threatens the entire region. Through neglect, the United States enables this fertile breeding ground to grow and prosper, and enables the educational goals and spread of radical Islamic fundamentalist doctrine throughout the region.

Since 2002, the United States has relied principally on the Pakistan military to address its national security goals in this region.<sup>2</sup> The United States must change this approach and partner with Pakistan and other coalition partners to deny extremist groups a safe haven in the FATA/NWFP. The cultural and tribal history of the FATA/NWFP as well as Pakistan's approach to the region compounds the complexity of the situation tremendously. Conventional wisdom might suggest that the United States conduct aggressive unilateral military action because of national security interests. The United States should confront the problem if no other country will. However, the reality is that the United States walks a delicate line conducting any unilateral military action that might cause negative strategic impacts in the region. Further, it would alienate the Pakistani government. As such, it is imperative that the United States remain engaged with Pakistan and its allies as they determine long-term policy in the region. If the fight is lost against al Qaeda and Islamic extremism in the FATA/NWFP, the results could be

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2. United States, Combating Terrorism, *The United States Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy the Terrorist Threat and Close the Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas*, Report to Congressional Requesters (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Accountability Office, 2008), 3.

disastrous with global repercussions. It is imperative therefore, that Pakistan and its allies, especially the United States, understand the nature and the causes of the conflict.<sup>3</sup>

First, it is imperative that the United States and its allies understand the recent history of denying al Qaeda centers of gravity and safe havens and apply those lessons in the future.

The United States has entertained long-term policy for this region, but has not followed through since 9-11.

No comprehensive plan for meeting United States national security goals in the FATA has been developed, as stipulated by the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, recommended by the independent 9-11 Commission and mandated by congressional legislation. Since 2003, the administration's national security strategies and Congress have recognized that a comprehensive plan that includes all elements of national power—diplomatic, military, intelligence, developmental assistance, economic, and law enforcement support-needed to address the terrorist threat emanating from the FATA.<sup>4</sup>

Leaving the FATA/NWFP for Pakistan to deal with is tempting. The path of least resistance – asserting that this is not an American problem – would bring much short-term relief to the United States, its allies, strategic decision makers, the economy, the interagency community, and an already-stretched military. However, this assertion would be wrong. Failure to develop and follow through on long-term policy for stability in the FATA/NWFP will have a negative strategic effect and will embolden extremist groups worldwide.

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3. Ibid., 3.

4. Ibid., 3-4.

Al Qaeda and other extremist groups must never have a safe haven or a center of gravity of their own. At present, it seems that they have settled again on the FATA/NWFP. Prevention of this circumstance requires an understanding of the history and complexities of the FATA/NWFP, awareness of the regional players and the influence they provide, and analysis of historical successes and failures in denying extremist sanctuaries. These issues will be the focus of this thesis. Once considered, this analysis will demonstrate how the United States, its allies, the United Nations, and the International Community unwittingly enabled, and later successfully denied al Qaeda's centers of gravity in the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia. From this analysis, recommendations follow for the development and support to long-term policy and strategic goals that deny al Qaeda the center of gravity they seek in the FATA/NWFP.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **REGIONAL BACKGROUND**

### **Introduction**

In order to appreciate the FATA/NWFP today, we must understand the history of the region. A good place to begin is in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Pashtuns of various tribes inhabited the area along the British/Indian frontier and Afghanistan border, the current FATA/NWFP. At that time, the British were concerned with Russian expansion into Central Asia. This compelled them to launch two wars on Afghanistan in 1839-42 and 1878-79. The Pashtuns viewed themselves as part of the anti-British resistance and fought along with the rulers of Kabul against British and Indian forces. Nonetheless, after the second Anglo-Afghan war, the Pashtuns of the region fell under British rule.<sup>1</sup>

Despite their evident military success, the political establishment in London realized that constant attacks by Pashtun tribes against forces of the East India Company were costly. Britain, having control of Afghan foreign policy, compelled King Abdur Rahman of Afghanistan to accept the Durand Line agreement. This agreement gave the Pashtuns living in portions of what are today the FATA /NWFP autonomy in running their internal affairs.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The Naval Postgraduate School, Program for Culture and Conflict Studies, “Modern History of Federally Administered Tribal Areas,” [http://www.nps.edu/Programs/CCS/Docs/Pakistan/FATA\\_history.pdf](http://www.nps.edu/Programs/CCS/Docs/Pakistan/FATA_history.pdf), (accessed November 16, 2009),1-2.

2. Ibid., 1-2.

Several years later, when Britain granted India its independence in 1947, the Durand Line agreement became void. Pakistan was a newly created state and the tribal areas became their issue to work. Pakistan negotiated a new agreement that essentially granted the rights and privileges of the maliks<sup>3</sup> and gave autonomy to the FATA and NWFP. In return, the tribes in the region pledged their loyalty to Pakistan. The political relations between the FATA/NWFP, the federal government of Pakistan, and the administrative set-up of the tribal areas were formalized by orders, notifications by the Governor General of Pakistan, and agreements. These were eventually finalized in the Pakistan Constitution of 1973.<sup>4</sup> These orders, notifications, and internal agreements result today in a condition whereby the FATA/NWFP has never experienced a true form of formal governance. The British system for management of the tribe focused on protecting economic interests. Pakistan's system allowed the region to operate with little interference or influence from the government.

Until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the FATA/NWFP was a society based around pure tribal traditions and loyalties. Islamic extremism had not yet influenced the FATA/NWFP, but that was soon to change. Many of the problems that the United States faces today can trace their history back to this point, as Islamic extremism began to infiltrate the FATA/NWFP.

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3. Maliks: Term used in Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan, especially among Pashtuns, for a tribal leader or a chieftain. Maliks serve as de facto arbiters in local conflicts, interlocutors in state policy-making, tax-collectors, heads of village and town councils. Definition cited from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malik#Afghanistan,\\_26\\_Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malik#Afghanistan,_26_Pakistan). (last accessed 26 Apr 2010).

4. Ibid., 1-2.

## Geography and Governance

The FATA/NWFP is mountainous and shares a 373-mile border with Afghanistan. This border is largely unregulated, allowing freedom of movement for the Taliban and al Qaeda between Afghanistan and the FATA/NWFP. The population is approximately 3.1 million. High poverty, high unemployment, underdeveloped infrastructure and a literacy rate of 17 percent, compared with 56 percent nationally, enhance Islamic fundamentalist extremist's and al Qaeda's opportunities to control the population.<sup>5</sup>

The Federal Crimes Regulations (FCR) governs the FATA. These regulations are legally separate from and unequal to the body of laws governing other Pakistani citizens. Examples of these differences include:

1. FATA/NWFP residents do not have access to national political parties, and political parties are forbidden from extending their activities into the agencies of FATA.
2. The FATA/NWFP is under the direct executive authority of the President of Pakistan. Laws framed by the National Assembly of Pakistan do not apply in the FATA unless so ordered by the President, who is empowered to issue regulations for the tribal areas.
3. FATA/NWFP residents do not have the right to legal representation, to present material evidence, or to cross-examine witnesses in Pakistan's judicial system. Those convicted are denied the right of appeal in Pakistan's courts.
4. The President's representatives to the FATA, who are called political agents, can punish an entire tribe for crimes committed on the tribe's territory by issuing fines, making arrests, implementing property seizures, and establishing blockades.<sup>6</sup>

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5. United States *Combating Terrorism The United States Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy the Terrorist Threat and Close the Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas*, 6-7.

6. Ibid., 8.

Although the FCR provisions recognize the tribal affinities and structure of the FATA/NWFP, it clearly demonstrates that the population has little voice or rights in Pakistan society, and extract few benefits as Pakistani citizens. This arrangement also makes it extremely susceptible to outside influence, which Islamic extremists have used very effectively.

## **Key Regional Influences**

### **Pakistan**

It is hard to overstate the importance of Pakistan in the struggle against Islamist extremism. Within Pakistan's borders are 150 million Muslims, scores of al Qaeda terrorists, and many Taliban fighters.<sup>7</sup> Since 9-11, a lack of unified U.S. policy in conjunction with the government of Pakistan has allowed the FATA/NWFP to nurture terrorism and extremism.

Pakistan's endemic poverty and widespread corruption create other opportunities for Islamist recruitment.<sup>8</sup> There is no education system that affords Pakistanis the same opportunities westernized countries take for granted. Millions of families, especially those with little money, send their children to religious schools, or madrassas.<sup>9</sup> Many of these schools are the only opportunity available for education. Unfortunately, they also

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7. National Commission, *The 9-11 Commission Report*, 367.

8. Ibid., 367.

<sup>9</sup> Madrassas: Islamic seminaries that teach mostly Islamic subjects leading to graduation as a cleric (called maulvi , maulana or mulla ) in Pakistan.  
<http://ask.reference.com/related/Pakistan+Madrassas?qs=2892&l=dir&o=10601>. (last accessed 26 Apr 2010).

function as incubators for violent extremism. According to Karachi's police commander, there are 859 madrassas teaching more than 200,000 youngsters in his city alone.<sup>10</sup>

What is becoming more prevalent within the madrassas is an education that breeds extremism. However, for many lower-class citizens, this is the only educational outlet available to them. The Islamist extremists and al Qaeda are well aware of the tactical and strategic advantage the madrassas provide and they use the madrassas as a tool to export their violent brand of Islam.

In addition to the madrassa issue, the 9-11 report talks to other areas we must continue to work with Pakistan to try to improve. These areas are terrorism, nuclear proliferation and democratic rule:

On terrorism, Pakistan helped nurture the Taliban. The Pakistani army and intelligence services, especially below the top ranks, have long been ambivalent about confronting Islamist extremists. Many in the government have sympathized with or provided support to the extremists.

On proliferation, Musharraf has repeatedly said that Pakistan does not barter with its nuclear technology. Most recently, the Pakistani government has claimed not to know that one of its nuclear weapons developers, a national figure, was leading the most dangerous nuclear smuggling ring ever disclosed. Ensuring that nuclear capability does not fall into the hands of al Qaeda and other extremist groups is imperative.

Finally, Pakistan has made little progress toward the return of democratic rule at the national level, although that turbulent process does continue to function at the provincial level and the Pakistani press remains relatively free.<sup>11</sup>

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10. National Commission, *The 9-11 Commission Report*, 367.

11. Ibid., 368.

Pakistan must be stable and a partner in order for any United States long-term policy to be successful in the region. Clearly, Pakistan must do more than they have in the past and the United States must collaborate with them effectively.

Efforts to encourage the Pakistanis to do more are ongoing. The United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies have been pressuring Pakistan to stop the Taliban and al Qaeda from seeking sanctuary in the FATA/NWFP since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. To incentivize them to do more since 2001, the United States has also provided more than 10 billion dollars to Pakistan to offset the cost of moving troops into the region.<sup>12</sup> We will examine how effective this action and others have been as we recommend long-term policy for success.

### **Afghanistan**

Afghanistan was the incubator and the center of gravity for al Qaeda leading up to the 9-11 attacks. In the fall of 2001, the U.S.-led coalition and its Afghan allies toppled the Taliban and ended the regime's protection of al Qaeda.<sup>13</sup> Events that transpired after the fall of the Taliban in 2001 left much optimism for a stable Afghanistan. Many felt that Afghanistan would serve as the model of success in this latest age of warfare. A small number of Americans and interagency teams acting in conjunction with Northern Alliance forces achieved the victory. The swift victory that toppled the Taliban, the subsequent retreat of al Qaeda, as well as the stand-up of the new Afghan Government

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12. Shuja Nawaz, "*FATA- A Most Dangerous Place: Meeting the Challenge of Militancy and Terror in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan*," (Center for Strategic & International Studies, January 2009), 11.

13. National Commission, *The 9-11 Commission Report*, 369.

was initially very encouraging. This encouraging progress included the Bonn Agreement under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1385 (2001). Under U.N. auspices, Afghan participants met to outline a process for the political transition in Afghanistan. The Bonn Agreement established an Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) on December 22, 2001, and established 30 standing members headed by Chairman Hamid Karzai.<sup>14</sup> Although the toppling of the Taliban and signing of the Bonn Agreement left many feeling encouraged, current events show that the United States and its allies did not have a good grasp of the complexities associated with Afghanistan.

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the United States and its allies failed to follow through on a coherent long-term policy and strategy. Although efforts continue towards the legitimizing the Afghanistan government in Kabul, the Taliban have regained control of selected areas away from the large cities and have reasserted their influence over the population in these areas. This is very similar to the Afghan-Russian war where the Mujahedeen controlled the rural areas and the Soviets controlled the urban areas. As with the Afghan-Russian case, the border areas are especially vulnerable. The Taliban are able to move freely between the Afghanistan–Pakistan borders, just as the mujahedeen did during the Afghan-Russian war. This allows refuge and provides the capability to fuel the insurgency. A lack of clear United States policy and the lack of understanding of the history and culture of the region are major factors adding to the current destabilization of Afghanistan. In General Stanley McChrystal’s initial International Security Assistance Force Commander’s assessment on the current situation in Afghanistan submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 30, August 2009, he states:

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<sup>14</sup> Rhoda Margesson, *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan: Background and Policy Issue* (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2009), 5.

Most insurgent fighters are Afghans. They receive direction from a small number of Afghan senior leaders that reside in Pakistan that work through an alternate political infrastructure in Afghanistan. Foreign fighters, elements of some intelligence agencies, and international funding, resources and training, aid them. Foreign fighters provide material, expertise, and ideological commitment.<sup>15</sup>

A lack of United States policy in the FATA/NWFP has not only produced a new incubator for Islamic extremism, but has placed in jeopardy the initial successes of 2001. At present, this absence of policy bolsters the prestige of the insurgency in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan remains a major concern for regional stability. The unsavory links between the Taliban, Al Qaeda, Islamic fundamental extremists, Afghanistan, and the FATA/NWFP are many. However, stability in Afghanistan will be critical to stability in the FATA/NWFP. If the United States and its allies fail to stabilize and establish effective long-term policy for Afghanistan, it will be a major victory for Islamic extremism and al Qaeda strategic goals.

### **Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia is a nation that is crucial to the United States in combating extremism, both in the short term and long term. Saudi Arabia must be involved in the long-term policy decisions and strategic vision for FATA/NWFP. Saudi Arabia is a problematic ally in combating Islamic extremism. At the level of high policy, Saudi Arabia's leaders cooperated with American diplomatic initiatives aimed at the Taliban or Pakistan before 9-11. At the same time, Saudi Arabia's society was a place where al Qaeda raised money directly from individuals, and through charities. The society

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15. Stanley A. McChrystal, *Commander's Initial Assessment* (Kabul, Afghanistan: Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force, 2009), 2-5.

produced 15 of the 19 9-11 hijackers.<sup>16</sup> Relations with Saudi Arabia continue to play a major role in the United States ability to disrupt Islamic fundamental extremists.

The Kingdom realizes it must take action to deal with Islamic extremism within its borders. Prior to May 2003, cooperation with the United States was significant, but after the bombings in Riyadh, it improved significantly. Following this event, the Kingdom openly discussed the problem of radicalism, criticized the terrorists as religiously deviant, reduced official support for religious activity overseas, closed suspect charitable foundations, and publicized arrests.<sup>17</sup> Coming out publically and condemning Islamic fundamental extremism was a major step for Saudi Arabia. However, continued cooperation and efforts by both the United States and Saudi Arabia are imperative to long-term stability to the region. Unfortunately, there are still many within the Kingdom's borders that remain sympathetic to the extremists. If al Qaeda and associated groups operate with impunity in a region like the FATA/NWFP, then the sympathizers, many from Saudi Arabia, will continue to funnel their resources to the movement. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and al Qaeda are in combat with one another. Saudi police regularly die in shootouts with terrorists. In June 2004, the Saudi ambassador to the United States called publicly—in the Saudi press—for his government to wage a jihad of its own against the terrorists, “We must all, as a state and as a people, recognize the truth about these criminals.”<sup>18</sup> Denying any center of gravity to al Qaeda and Islamic

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16. National Commission, *The 9-11 Commission Report*, 371.

17. Ibid., 373.

18. Ibid., 374.

fundamentalist extremism must involve Saudi Arabia. Nurturing further progress with the Saudi Arabian government should be a key strategic goal of the United States.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the FATA/NWFP presents a complex and challenging environment to the United States and its allies as we determine future long-term policy. There are many factors and influences that policy-makers of the United States and its allies must take the time to understand, to insure that we determine the correct approach. As described in this chapter, the factors range from the formidable geographical barriers, to tribal cultures, to an educational system that introduces indoctrination to extremist views early in the education process. Additionally, understanding the FATA includes understanding the external influences including regional partners and the domestic challenges that they face in combating Islamic fundamental extremism and al Qaeda. Although this paper only examines a few of the regional players, the United States must work in partnership with all regional players and unite collective efforts towards denying centers of gravity for al Qaeda and extremism in the FATA/NWFP. This is the only strategy for success.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE FATA/NWFP AND THE AFGHAN-RUSSIAN WAR

#### Introduction

United States policy towards Pakistan and the FATA/NWFP during the Afghan-Russian war provides an outstanding case study of achieving short-term policy goals and objectives. Unfortunately, it also demonstrates a miserable failure to capitalize on the short-term success with long-term policy vision in the region.

During the Afghan-Russian war, the United States and its allies viewed the FATA/NWFP as very advantageous to their strategic goals and objectives. For the United States, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December of 1979 was an opportunity. Just as the Soviets had aided the North Vietnamese in their war against the United States, now the Americans had an opportunity to help finance the Afghan struggle against the Soviets.<sup>1</sup> The FATA/NWFP region was to play a key role for the United States in this effort. Peshawar, the winter residence of Afghan kings until early nineteenth century, had been a battleground for imperial armies and tribal warlords for centuries. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Peshawar transformed into the key staging base for the Afghan jihad. Only drug dealers and spies had previously had exposure to the region, but during the Afghan jihad, it burgeoned.<sup>2</sup> In George Crile's book, *Charlie Wilson's War*, he

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1. Peter L Bergen, *Holy War Inc Inside the Secret World of Osama Bin Laden* (Paw Prints, 2008), 63.

2. Mary Anne Weaver, *Pakistan: In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 76.

referenced Wilson's similar thoughts on the border region of Pakistan when he arrived in there in 1982:

The mujahedeen had been fighting the Soviets for almost three years. Some 2.7 million Afghans had already made their agonizing trek over the mountains to seek refuge in this exotic Muslim nation. They were still pouring in at a rate of thousands a month, creating huge walled cities of mud huts. Close to one fifth of the Afghan people were huddled in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. Wilson did not fully understand at the time, but this zone of displaced Afghans had become the true front line of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup>

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan meant that Pakistan was effectively on the Cold War front line. Pakistan was therefore in good position to gain support from the United States, with substantial aid and armaments flowing through them into Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> This new front line in the Cold War was to be a huge strategic advantage to the United States. With the majority of the aid flowing through the FATA/NWFP, the region became the center of gravity in the United States efforts against the Soviets.

To exploit this new front line in the Cold War, the United States and its allies used Pakistan as a staging base to support the Afghan jihad. The Mujahedeen used the area for refuge and a base to conduct operations as well as a safe haven from the Soviets. The Soviets were unable to deny this sanctuary or influence the Mujahedeen actions in the FATA/NWFP. They also failed to develop any long-term policy to deny this center of gravity, and this was a key factor in their defeat.

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3. George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), 102.

4. Paul Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008), 120.

## Mujahedeen Center of Gravity

The United States saw this conflict as a good jihad. Ironically, so did a young Saudi Arabian named Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden was originally a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) asset, although his skill sets were more logistical and construction based-rather than combat focused.<sup>5</sup> When the jihad began, bin Laden was one of those to rush to the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan to meet with mujahedeen leaders. From 1979 to 1982, he collected funds and material for the jihad and made intermittent visits from his home in Saudi Arabia to Pakistan. In 1982, he entered Afghanistan bringing large quantities of construction materials as well as funding. He had become a full participant in the Afghan jihad, and his stature grew.<sup>6</sup>

His actions reflected his idealism that the Soviet occupation was not only an Afghan problem, but also a violation of Islam in general. He encouraged involvement by the greater Arab world and was prepared to use his influence and stature however it would benefit the jihad. By 1984, increasing numbers of Arab Mujahedeen arrived in Pakistan to join the holy war. Bin Laden responded by establishing a guesthouse in Peshawar in the NWFP for Arabs on their way to the front in Afghanistan. He subsequently created al Qaeda (the base), to organize and track the channeling of fighters and funds for the Afghan resistance.<sup>7</sup>

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5. Ibid., 120.

6. John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 10.

7. Ibid., 10

Without the safe haven provided by the FATA/NWFP, the Afghan jihad would have failed in defeating the Soviets. Millions of Afghan refugees found a home in that safe haven and it provided the mujahedeen an area to refit and rearm, recruit, tend to wounded, and a base to launch attacks. It also provided an area where influential anti-Soviet personalities could observe the effort, which allowed the jihad to gain sympathy internationally.

An example of the impact this region had, not only as a center of gravity for the mujahedeen, but also as a center of gravity for external support, was when United States Representative Clarence D. Long made a visit. As Chairman of The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Government Operations, he presided over the twelve men who doled-out the State Department's entire budget as well as all foreign military and economic assistance.<sup>8</sup> He would become critical in determining United States policy towards support to the conflict. Congressman Charlie Wilson recognized Long's potential role and convinced the chairman to travel to Pakistan and the border region in August 1983 to get a firsthand look at the efforts of the Mujahedeen against the Soviets. The impact of this visit to the FATA/NWFP would be profound.

The visit began at the front in the refugee camps with two and a half million destitute Afghans in their walled compounds. Then on to the Red Cross Hospital, where the delegation saw Afghan boys and young men without arms, legs, some without eyes, none complaining. Doc Long, the chairman's nickname, was the only member of Congress who had a son who had been wounded in Vietnam, and it was impossible for him not to be impressed with the quiet courage of these men. Then he visited Afghan Elders. One after another, the leaders stood up to address Long, in every instance telling him about the Russian gunships that were slaughtering their people and were invulnerable to the bullets from their rifles and machine guns. Doc Long then began making a reasonably supportive but

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8. Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War*, 175.

not excessive statement about the horror of the Soviet atrocities. From the tent came great cries of *Allahu Akbar*, God is great. Charlie Wilson watched with amazement as the seventy-two-year old former professor of economics seemed to have an adrenaline rush. Suddenly the old man was roaring to these Muslim warriors that he was going to get them what they needed to knock the helicopters out of the sky. Wilson realized that he had just witnessed the conversion of Long into an honorary mujahedeen.<sup>9</sup>

One of the major appropriators in the United States Government had just taken personal ownership of the Mujahedeen struggle. Funding for their cause would grow substantially.

Over the remaining course of the conflict, funding increased from under 100 million dollars in 1981, to 120 million in 1983, and then jumped to 250 million in 1984, to a staggering sum of almost 700 million in 1988.<sup>10</sup> This momentum was due in no small part to Clarence “Doc” Long’s recruitment by the Mujahedeen. Soon the weapon the Mujahedeen needed to achieve military victory arrived to the region in the form of the Stinger missile.

Determining long-term United States policy for the future requires an understanding of how the Mujahedeen used the FATA/NWFP to its advantage during the Afghan-Russian conflict. This region was the center of gravity for the Mujahedeen, and the Mujahedeen used the FATA/NWFP much as al Qaeda, the Taliban, and other extremist organizations use the FATA/NWFP today. Regrettably, at the end of this war, the United States failed to establish any long-term policy promoting stability, education, and economic stability that would preserve their influence in the FATA/NWFP or Pakistan. It is important to understand this failure as it was a contributing factor to 9-11,

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9. Ibid., 191.

10. William J. Daugherty, *Executive Secrets: Covert Action and the Presidency* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 206.

and is a contributing factor to the freedom of action that al Qaeda enjoys today in the FATA/NWFP.

### **Pakistan Policy in the FATA/NWFP**

Pakistani policy in the FATA/NWFP was advantageous to the United States in achieving its short-term strategic goals against the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, the United States failed in establishing long-term policy for the region in partnership with the Pakistani government following the Soviet defeat. An understanding of this failure is important because Pakistan is a crucial player in any successful long-term policy containing al Qaeda and Islamic extremism in the FATA/NWFP.

Pakistan vigorously opposed the Soviet invasion from the start. With its bitter enemy India on its other side, Islamabad saw a Soviet-controlled Afghanistan as encirclement by hostile countries and potential isolation. Pakistan's military dictator, Mohammed Zia, also feared the invasion's success would encourage the Kremlin to push even farther south in a drive for access to Middle East oil and the Arabian Sea.<sup>11</sup> This presented Zia with some difficult decisions. He did not want to get into a shooting war with the Soviets, but he could not let them initiate a domino effect in the region. Pakistan had to contain the Soviet threat.

General Akhtar Abdur Rahman Khan, the chief of the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), helped convince Zia of the feasibility of grinding down the Soviet military machine in Afghanistan. Akhtar prevailed on Zia to supply arms and training to the Afghan resistance providing the pot did not "boil over". In addition, Islamabad would allow

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11. Gregor Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: Harper, 2009), 130.

the Mujahedeen to establish base camps in its lawless FATA/NWFP bordering Pakistan.<sup>12</sup>

Zia's decision to allow the Mujahedeen to operate within its borders was risky and one that could affect Pakistan's national security. He did not overtly proclaim his support to the Mujahedeen; much of the support was through covert means. Zia was playing a dangerous game.

The Soviets were very skeptical of Zia and his intentions. At Leonid Brezhnev's funeral in Moscow, Yuri Andropov took Zia aside and threatened to destroy his government if he did not cut off the Afghans. Zia simply looked the Communist Party boss in the eye and replied that there were no Afghan guerrillas in his country.<sup>13</sup> Despite this claim, Pakistan allowed itself to serve as a conduit for financial and arms support provided through a number of channels. These included the United States, Saudi Arabia and a number of other Muslim countries and Islamic charity organizations.<sup>14</sup>

The United States did not fully recognize the risks that Zia and the Pakistani government took in supporting the Mujahedeen against the Soviets, and following the Soviet defeat, turned its back on Pakistan.

Following the conflict, the United States "discovered" what was already known, Pakistan was working on the Islamic Bomb. Nevertheless, with the Russians gone, the United States imposed sanctions. All military and economic assistance ended, a fleet of F-16 that Pakistan purchased was withheld, and the Clinton administration placed Pakistan on the list of states sponsors of terrorism. The Pakistani military had long been the

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12. Ibid., 130.

13. Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War*, 175.

14. Javed Iqbal, *Effects of International Terrorism on the Security of Pakistan* (USAWC Strategy Research Project. Carlisle Barracks, Pa: U.S. Army War College, 2007), 2.

surrogates for the CIA, and every Afghan and Arab mujahedeen came to believe that America had betrayed the Pakistanis.<sup>15</sup>

The United States must understand this perception of abandonment by Pakistan and be sensitive to this in establishing future long-term policy to deny al Qaeda and Islamist extremists a center of gravity in the FATA/NWFP.

### **United States Policy in the FATA/NWFP**

Twin events in 1979, the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, renewed American interest in improving the United States-Pakistan relationship.<sup>16</sup> The United States policy objectives toward Afghanistan during this period had been to end communist rule and Soviet influence in the region. Little or no concern existed for a strategy that would preserve U.S. influence under a post-communist government.<sup>17</sup> Pakistan was a key geostrategic player as it served as a buffer between the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf. The United States decided to fight a proxy war in land-locked Afghanistan, and America sought Pakistan's support to spearhead this fight.<sup>18</sup> The FATA/NWFP would be crucial in this fight and the United States needed the support of the Pakistani government to enable the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan.

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15. Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War*, 522.

16. T. Gilani, "US-Pakistan Relations: The Way Forward" (Parameters: Journal of the US Army War College. 36, no. 4: 2006), 87.

17. Mark A. Burrough, *A Historical Case Study of U.S. Strategy Towards Afghanistan* (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2009), 13.

18. Gilani, "US-Pakistan Relations: The Way Forward," 87.

The United States developed a covert war strategy with the CIA being the conduit for all support provided to the jihad. The CIA worked closely with the Saudis and Pakistanis.

The Saudis agreed to match dollar for dollar United States support to the Mujahedeen. The United States-Saudi-Pakistani alliance's financing, training and arming of the Mujahedeen--recruited from among the 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan--was coordinated and supervised by the CIA. The day-to-day management rested with Pakistan's ISI. The CIA handled all donations in weapons and cash to the campaign by various sources--chiefly Washington and Riyadh. These amounted to about \$40 billion.<sup>19</sup>

Besides the monetary contribution towards the jihad, the greatest weapon supplied was the Stinger missile. Long came through on his promise to the mujahedeen and the United States delivered the weapon that would bring down the vaunted Soviet MI-24's.<sup>20</sup> Armed with CIA-supplied Stinger missiles in the later stages of the jihad, the mujahedeen shot down numerous Soviet helicopter gunships, a critical tool of the USSR's counterinsurgency campaign.<sup>21</sup> Some reports credited the Stinger with downing over 270 aircraft per year from 1986 to 1989, but reports from both the Soviet military and the United States put the number at about 279 for the three-year period.<sup>22</sup> All of these

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19. Dilip Hiro, "The Cost of an Afghan 'Victory' - Islamic Militants, Once Encouraged by the United States, Now Threaten It, *The Nation*. 268, no. 6, 1999, 17.

<sup>20</sup> MI-24: A large helicopter gunship and low-capacity troop transport operated by the Soviet Air Force and over thirty other nations. The aircraft was operated extensively during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, mainly for bombing Mujahedeen fighters. The US supplied heat-seeking Stinger missiles to the Mujahedeen, and the Soviet Mi-24 helicopters proved to be favorite targets of the rebels. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MI-24>. (last accessed 26 Apr 2010).

21. Ibid., 2.

22. Tom Lansford, *A Bitter Harvest: US Foreign Policy and Afghanistan* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2003), 128.

missiles were funneled from the United States, into Pakistan, through the FATA/NWFP, and on into Afghanistan. Although it represents a strategic vulnerability today as we fight the Taliban, al Qaeda, and Islamic fundamentalist extremism, the FATA/NWFP provided the United States, its Allies, and the Mujahedeen a crucial center of gravity from which to conduct their war against the Soviets.

This is an example of United States policy and strategic vision at its best. The United States used its national tools of power and whole of government approach brilliantly. They employed diplomatic tools by creating alliances with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Mujahedeen, and others. They employed informational tools by glamorizing the Mujahedeen's efforts both at home and internationally by sending reporters to bring a face to the struggle outside the region. They employed military capabilities by providing advisors and weapons, particularly the Stinger missile. Moreover, they used economic power as well. While the total funds spent in Afghanistan for a better part of a decade (well over a \$1 billion) seems to be, and indeed is, an enormous amount of money, it essentially purchased the demise of the Soviet Union. Perhaps those billion dollars were a reasonable price to pay for the end of the cold war.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, this United States approach ended up being a short-term policy and strategic vision rather than a long-term strategy.

The United States efforts during this period provide a good lesson. The Soviet defeat was a great victory for the United States and the West. Unfortunately, the United States focused on the defeat of the Soviets and appreciated little beyond that. The United States depended exclusively on the FATA/NWFP as its center of gravity during the

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23. Daugherty, *Executive Secrets*, 207.

Afghan-Russian conflict, but failed to recognize the FATA/NWFP had again become a potential safe haven and center of gravity after the invasion that toppled the Taliban in 2001. Bin Laden and his al Qaeda operatives did recognize the potential value of this safe haven and escaped from Afghanistan across the border, and again reestablished and reorganized themselves in the FATA/NWFP.

### **Post-Conflict Policy Failure**

Unfortunately, when the friendship between the United States and Pakistan seemed the strongest, the collapse of the Soviet Union abruptly shifted United States interests. United States policy relegated Pakistan to the status of a backwater outpost, given that it was mired in ethnic violence and suspect in the war against drug trafficking.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, the United States is paying the price today for turning its backs on Pakistan.

At present, the current Secretary of State Hilary Clinton is working to restore trust between the U.S and the Pakistanis. In comments that made headlines in Pakistan, Clinton called U.S. policy towards Pakistan over the past 30 years “incoherent.”<sup>25</sup> She recalled United States support for and funding of Islamists fighting the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan, saying this required partnership with Pakistan. However, when the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan following their defeat, “we basically said thanks very

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24. Dipac K Gupta, “*The Pakistan Alliance of Change*”, *The San Diego Tribune*. 18 June 2009), [http://legacy.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20040618/news\\_1z1e18gupta.html](http://legacy.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20040618/news_1z1e18gupta.html)

25 Patrick Goodenough, “US Shares Responsibility for Pakistan Crisis, Clinton Says” *CNSNews.com*, May 2009, <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/48392>

much" and disengaged.<sup>26</sup> Pakistan's President Zardari echoed these sentiments in May of 2009 when he stated that the world had turned its back on Afghanistan after the Soviet defeat, leaving Pakistan with three million Afghan refugees in camps that soon became breeding grounds for intolerance and violence. The resulting consequence was the birth of al Qaeda and the Talibanization of Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup>

As the Afghan freedom fighters and Mujahedeen had no common enemy following the withdrawal of the Soviets, they returned to their old ways of life. By 1990, the Afghan freedom fighters had suddenly and frighteningly declined as an effective and united fighting force, and reemerged as little more than a diverse group of feuding warlords obsessed with settling generations-old scores. The difference now was that they possessed hundreds of millions of dollars worth of weapons and explosives of every type.<sup>28</sup> This was a hugely destabilizing factor in Afghanistan made worse by the fact that there was no United States or international long-term policy to help Afghanistan move forward collectively as one nation. Instead, the United States lost interest in Afghanistan and turned its back on Pakistan. Since the Soviet Union had fallen, the United States short-sightedly perceived that there was no threat and no need for any comprehensive long-term policy in the region.

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26 Ibid.,1.

27. Ibid.,1.

28. Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War*, 513.

## Conclusion

The Afghan-Russian war had a profound impact on the FATA/NWFP. There are two main points that demonstrate the impact of how extremists and terrorists have exploited the FATA/NWFP. The first is the concept of centers of gravity. All Mujahedeen efforts against the Soviets evolved from the effective use of the FATA/NWFP. They were able to gain popular support from the local tribes of the region. That support translated into freedom of action and sympathy for a cause. The region provided a hub and spoke operation for United States and other sympathetic nations to flow financial aid and weapons to the mujahedeen, which were funneled to Afghanistan.

Because the FATA/NWFP had no form of formal government, the mujahedeen went unchallenged by any specific set of rules or governance. In developing an argument for a long-term United States policy in the FATA/NWFP, it becomes apparent that the trend for law and governance in the border region usually lies with the group with the greatest power. Any movement must have a base or center of gravity from which all activities originate. For the objectives of the jihad and the strategic goals of the United States of a Soviet Union defeat, the FATA/NWFP was an ideal center of gravity.

The second point was the evolution of the madrassas. During the Afghan-Russian war, the jihad concept spread throughout the region.<sup>29</sup> At the time, the United States took no position on how the madrassas were utilized, as long as they aided the U.S. strategic goal of defeating the Soviet Union. In large part, the madrassas became indoctrination

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29. Ahmed Ishtiaq, *The Madrassa Industry*, Awaaz-South Asia Watch News, 26 July 2006,

centers, infusing potential mujahedeen with the spirit of jihad to fight in Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup>

The madrassas proliferated throughout the poverty-stricken refugee camps that had sprung up along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border during the war with the Soviets. In those schools, the youngsters were taught a fierce and uncompromising form of Islam-based on an absolute enforcement of Sharia law that was mixed with virulently anti-western and anti-Semitic teachings.<sup>31</sup>

The FATA and NWFP provided an ideal center of gravity during the Afghan-Russian war through its forbidding geography, centuries of lawlessness, and lack of governance. The United States used the region very effectively during this period in achieving its short-term strategic goals and policy objectives in the region. The period following the Soviet retreat and lack of United States policy will demonstrate how the opposite approach - a lack of long-term policy - can be disastrous.

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30. Iqbal, *Effects of International Terrorism on the Security of Pakistan*, 2.

31. Gerald L. Posner, *Why America Slept: The Failure to Prevent 9-11* (New York: Random House, 2003), 105.

## CHAPTER 3

### **DENYING BIN LADEN AND AL QAEDA CENTERS OF GRAVITY, SUCCESS AND FAILURE (PRE 9-11)**

#### **Introduction**

Determining long-term policy to deny al Qaeda and Islamist extremists a center of gravity in the FATA/NWFP is very complex. In order to determine the best course of action for the future, this analysis will consider a set of case studies, which will demonstrate both the successes and failures of the United States and its allies concerning al Qaeda. Selected case studies will demonstrate effective denial of centers of gravity to al Qaeda throughout the world. Other case studies will demonstrate the resiliency of al Qaeda and their capability and patience to reestablish a base after defeat. Understanding the lessons offered from these case studies is critical in determining effective long-term policy for denying al Qaeda a center of gravity in the FATA/NWFP.

After the Soviet withdrawal in Afghanistan, many of the Afghan Arabs as well as bin Laden, who had come to support the jihad, found themselves out of work. In many cases, they were not welcome any more by traditional Afghan leaders. Afghan commander Ahmad Shah Massoud was one of the Afghan leaders who opposed the Arab presence after the withdrawal of the Soviets. Massoud was firm on his desire for the Afghan Arabs to return home. He stated at the time that “the reality was that the jihad was over in Afghanistan. We do not need armed Arabs going around our country. It is

better for them to leave the country.”<sup>1</sup> It is clear through his statements that Massoud would not have tolerated the use of Afghanistan by militant Arabs for jihad training.<sup>2</sup> Massoud would play a major role in not only opposing the Arab-jihadis in that period, but also fighting them later as al Qaeda joined alliances with the Taliban.<sup>3</sup> Bin Laden was not going to find his center of gravity in Afghanistan any time soon, so he returned home. In order for bin Laden and al Qaeda to be successful, they needed freedom of maneuver. This would require the support of a nation who had common goals with al Qaeda.

### **Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia is a great example of a whole of government approach to denying bin Laden a center of gravity. The Royal family recognized the threat that bin Laden represented and took necessary steps to ensure that his vision did not gain momentum and support within the Kingdom’s borders.

Although bin Laden did not like the Saudi royal family, he had formed strong relationships with leading officials like intelligence Chief Prince Turki. He also knew that Saudi Arabia had been indispensable in helping the Afghan jihadis prevail against the Soviets. Turki urged him to come home, which he did.<sup>4</sup> Many of the Afghan jihadis followed suit and headed back to their native land. Bin Laden had become something of a folk hero, a well-to-do son of a prominent family who had given up his luxurious lifestyle

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1. Bergen, *Holy War Inc*, 72.

2. Ibid.

3. Ironically, only forty-eight hours before the destruction of the World Trade Center towers, two al Qaeda assassins posing as television reporters, would mortally wound Massoud.

4. Posner, *Why America Slept* 1, 40.

to rally Arabs to battle successfully against the Soviets. Prince Abdullah, next in line to the Saudi crown, personally greeted bin Laden upon his return. This honeymoon was to be short lived.<sup>5</sup>

There was a new threat to Saudi Arabia and a new opportunity for bin Laden to rally his Arab troops. Interestingly, bin Laden saw this new opportunity well before the Saudis saw the emerging threat. No sooner had he returned from Afghanistan, he began attending important social functions and sounding off about the imminent dangers to the Kingdom represented by Saddam Hussein's regime in neighboring Iraq. Bin Laden invoked Wahhabism<sup>6</sup> against the wayward Saddam and buttressed his argument with geopolitical analysis to justify his ready reserves of jihadis.<sup>7</sup> In bin Laden's mind, he had an enemy; and he had reserves of jihadis ready to answer the call to duty to combat this enemy and answer the call to jihad again. However, he lacked a robust base of support similar to the one he and the mujahedeen had experienced in the FATA/NWFP. His vision for a new al Qaeda center of gravity was Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden was traveling throughout Saudi Arabia espousing his message.

In the winter and spring of 1990, the Saudis were not pleased to have the young freelancing hero flitting from a lunch in Medina one day to another in Mecca the next, and then back to Jeddah a day later with his explosive anti-Iraqi message. By interfering

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5. Ibid., 40.

6. Wahhabism. Muslim sect founded by Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792), known for its strict observance of the Koran and flourishing mainly in Arabia.  
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Wahhabism>. (last accessed 26 April 2010).

7. Jonathan C. Randal, *Osama: The Making of a Terrorist* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 102.

in Saudi relations with Iraq, Osama was crossing a major red line. The Saudis needed no reminding that Saddam rarely took kindly to affronts, real or imaginary.<sup>8</sup>

The notion that Iraq would invade Kuwait sounded outlandish to the Saudis and beyond the realm of possibility. Unfortunately, bin Laden's prediction proved correct. On August 2, Saddam invaded and occupied Kuwait. Osama's embarrassing warnings about Saddam's designs had come true. No one else got it right, not in Washington, London, Paris, Riyadh, Beijing, and Moscow or, of course, Kuwait itself. With Saddam's troops on the Kingdom's border, why would Saddam feel any compunction about grabbing the Islamic holy places, along with Saudi oil reserves?<sup>9</sup> Bin Laden saw an opportunity to press his cause. His plan involved convincing the Saudi government that he could defeat the Iraqis in the name of jihad. He would use Saudi Arabia as his base, and pursue his goal of jihad against America and the west.

What bin Laden did in the wake of Kuwait's occupation became part of his legend. Osama was granted an audience with Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz al-Saudi, the long time defense minister. Boiling over with ideas inspired by his Afghan Jihad experience, Osama arrived with maps and detailed diagrams. He insisted that no non-believer army be allowed to sully the sacred land of the two holy mosques. The Kingdom did not need to rely on the Americans to defend itself and liberate Kuwait. Osama would do the job with his Afghan veterans. Prince Sultan pointed out that Kuwait was not like Afghanistan and was mostly flat, ideal terrain for the adversary's 4,000 tanks. Much like Massoud's argument of not wanting bands of armed Arab Afghans roaming unchecked in Afghanistan, the Saudis were less than enthused about the prospect of tens of thousands of armed Islamist radicals roaming around inside the Kingdom. Eventually the conversation died, and Osama was not satisfied with Sultan's lack of enthusiasm. As with all myths, variations abound. One version has Osama

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8. Ibid., 103.

9. Ibid., 104.

storming out of the room with the promise that “you’ll be hearing from me.”<sup>10</sup>

We are all familiar with the events of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm and the King allowing the American soldiers to enter the Kingdom. What is important to note is that the Saudi government denied bin Laden’s vision of establishing a center of gravity in the Kingdom. Although America had yet to recognize the threats that bin Laden was beginning to muster, Saudi Arabia was now well aware. They knew that they needed to move him out of the Kingdom and deny his freedom of action within their borders. Although bin Laden desired Jihad against Iraq using Saudi Arabia as his base, the words echoed at the end of his meeting with Prince Sultan, “you’ll be hearing from me” were profound.

Prince Turki looked back to that fateful meeting with Prince Sultan as the moment when he suddenly discovered “radical changes” in Osama’s personality as he started to transform himself “from a butterfly doing good deeds to a bloody revolutionary willing to sacrifice human lives for his violent cause.” He had changed from a man who wanted to help Muslims, to one who wanted to amass and command an army to liberate Kuwait. It revealed arrogance and haughtiness.<sup>11</sup>

Ultimately, the Royal family grew tired of bin Laden and his anti-government rhetoric.

The government placed him under house arrest and limited his travel in Saudi Arabia.

Bin Laden was not going to have the freedom to establish his center of gravity in the Kingdom, and he needed to find a new location. He needed to devise a plan to escape Saudi Arabia. He used his family connections with King Fahd to convince the government that he needed to leave the country to sort out some business matters in

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10. Ibid., 105.

11. Ibid., 106.

Pakistan. Arriving there in April of 1991, he sent a letter to his family telling them he would not be able to return home.<sup>12</sup>

Bin Laden thought Pakistan was the answer. He again took up residence in Peshawar in the NWFP. He tried to rally his cause but to no avail. Many things had changed since he had departed after the Jihad. Peshawar had become a backwater, Afghanistan had lost much of its luster as a Muslim cause, the United States and the rest of the West had walked away from the country, and the former “freedom fighters” had turned into cruel and ineffective warlords. Within months, bin Laden was on the move again, not back to Saudi Arabia, but to the Sudan. Indeed, he was never to return to Saudi Arabia.<sup>13</sup>

This case study shows how effective the Saudi Arabian government used its’ own whole of government approach to deny bin Laden his goals, vision, and a center of gravity in Saudi Arabia. Although bin Laden’s stature was that of a folk hero, he was recognized by the government to be a threat to the security and stability of the Kingdom. By restricting him to house arrest and denying him freedom of maneuver, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had effectively made bin Laden and al Qaeda powerless. This eventually forced his physical and ideological departure from the Kingdom.

### **Al Qaeda Center of Gravity in Sudan**

The case study of al Qaeda in Sudan provides an excellent example of how bin Laden and al Qaeda can thrive and build alliances with other extremist organizations

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12. Bergen, *Holy War Inc*, 78-79.

13. Randal, *Osama: The Making of a Terrorist*, 112-113.

when allowed to operate with impunity. The study shows that when al Qaeda has no restrictions, it can establish a center of gravity, build effective terrorist alliances on an international scale, and commit terrorist acts worldwide. The case study also demonstrates that when the international community works together to deny this freedom of action and uses all elements of international power (sanctions, governmental pressure, military actions, etc.) an al Qaeda center of gravity can be defeated.

The rise to political prominence of Hassan al Turabi and the National Islamic Front coincided with bin Laden's search for a new base after his expulsion from Saudi Arabia. Al Turabi, an old friend of bin Laden, was seeking to export his version of an Islamic revolution to the region, and transform Sudanese society; whereas, bin Laden found in Sudan a secure and isolated venture, supportive government, and ideological compatibility.<sup>14</sup> It was a perfect match. According to numerous press accounts, bin Laden and his followers relocated to Sudan in 1991, where he began to refine his jihadist ideology and strengthen al Qaeda's organization and financial infrastructure.

By the mid 1990's, bin Laden was reported to have amassed extensive landholdings, business and financial interests in the country, as well as considerable influence with the National Islamic Front. It was during this time in Sudan that al Qaeda apparently solidified ties to other radical Islamic organizations. Most notably Ayman al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad group.<sup>15</sup> This relationship would be very important, not only for bin Laden but also for the future of al Qaeda. Because of this relationship,

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14. Derek S. Reveron and Jeffrey Stevenson Murer. *Flashpoints in the War on Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 277.

15. Reveron and Murer. *Flashpoints in the War on Terrorism*, 277-279.

bin Laden merged al Qaeda with the Islamic Jihad, the organization run by al Zawahiri. Bin Laden then appointed al Zawahiri as his second in command, responsible for military operations. Many of al Zawahiri's friends became bin Laden's closest aides.<sup>16</sup>

Bin Laden was operating unchecked without the interference of government, something he could not do in Saudi Arabia. Sudan was using none of its diplomatic, information, military or economic instruments of power to keep bin Laden in check, and the United States was not taking any action to prevent al Qaeda from flourishing. As a result, bin Laden took full advantage of the situation and al Qaeda and its influence grew. Al Qaeda used its newfound freedom of maneuver and center of gravity in Sudan to pronounce its vision of Islam outside Sudan's borders.

With this freedom of action, al Qaeda worked to overcome doctrinal differences with other Muslim groups to unite against a common enemy. Bin Laden began attending terror conferences in other countries to discuss ways to cooperate in expelling foreigners from Islamic lands. He envisioned himself as the director of a clearinghouse for Islamic terrorism, which would not only undertake its own operations, but would also train and supply far-flung radical groups.<sup>17</sup> Things could not be working out any better for al Qaeda. Al-Turabi's Islamic state had become the perfect place for bin Laden's operation. Sudan was very hospitable; al-Turabi provided passports, a semiofficial status, and a base from which al Qaeda could travel to other parts of the world to make alliances.<sup>18</sup> These

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16. Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 26.

17. Posner, *Why America Slept*, 49.

18. Jane Corbin, *Al Qaeda: In Search of the Terror Network That Threatens the World* (Thunder Mouth Press/Nation Books, New York: 2002), 55.

alliances included groups from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Oman, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Somalia, and Eritrea, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Uganda; and from the Southeast Asian states of Burma, Thailand, and Malaysia. Al Qaeda developed connections to the Bosnian conflict as well.<sup>19</sup>

This pattern of expansion and building alliances extended to the United States. An alliance with a Muslim organization called al Khifa had numerous branch offices, the largest of which was in the Farouq mosque in Brooklyn. Other cities with branches of al Khifa included Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Tucson. The groundwork for a true global terrorist network had been laid.<sup>20</sup>

All was in place and the situation seemed to be ideal for long-term influence in the Sudan. Unchecked, with a growing network, and without any United States national elements of powers engaged to challenge bin Laden's goals and vision, al Qaeda now entered an operational stage outside the borders of Sudan. Eerily, like the events of 9-11, al Qaeda's activities would be the wake-up call that would eventually prompt the international community to seek to deny bin Laden's grand strategy.

While Sudan served as the center of gravity for al Qaeda in 1992-1996, many terrorist and extremist events occurred. In early 1992, the al Qaeda leadership issued a fatwa<sup>21</sup> calling for jihad against the western "occupation" of Islamic lands, specifically singling out U.S. forces for attack.<sup>22</sup>

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19. National Commission, *The 9-11 Commission Report*, 58.

20. Ibid., 58.

<sup>21</sup> **FATWA:** In the Islamic faith is a religious opinion concerning Islamic law issued by an Islamic scholar. An analogy might be made to the issue of legal opinions from courts in common-law systems. FATWAs generally contain the details of the scholar's reasoning, typically in response to a particular case,

After U.S. troops deployed to Somalia in late 1992, al Qaeda leaders formulated another fatwa demanding their eviction. In December, bombs exploded at two hotels in Aden where U.S. troops routinely stopped en route to Somalia, killing two, but no Americans. The perpetrators reportedly belonged to a group headed by a Yemeni member of bin Laden's Islamic Army Shura; and some in the group trained at an al Qaeda camp in Sudan.<sup>23</sup>

There was no reaction to this by the United States. This inaction emboldened al Qaeda. As such, al Qaeda was able to influence the Somali militia's fight against the United States military inside of Somalia. Al Qaeda leaders set up a Nairobi cell and used it to send weapons and trainers to the Somali warlords battling U.S. forces, an operation directly supervised by an al Qaeda's military leader.<sup>24</sup> The United States reaction to events in Somalia was the eventual withdraw U.S. forces from the country.

This withdrawal only served to further embolden al Qaeda, as well as solidify its standing in the Islamic world as an organization and a network of networks that were willing to stand up to the great superpower, the United States, just as they had done to the Soviets in the 1980's. The United States failed to connect the dots that al Qaeda was

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and are considered binding precedent by those Muslims who have bound themselves to that scholar. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatwa>. (last accessed 26 April 2010).

22 National Commission, *The 9-11 Commission Report*, 59.

23. Intelligence report, "Osama Bin Laden Links to a Southern Yemeni Group, Mar. 5, 1997 FBI report of investigation, interview of Fadl, Nov. 10, 1996," *CIA Analytic Report, "Old School Ties,"* (Mar. 10, 2003), 4.

24. Intelligence Report, "Bin Ladin's Activities in Somalia and Sudanese NIF Support," *The 9-11 Commission Report*, Apr. 30, 1997. 468

involved in Somalia and therefore failed to develop any long-term policy or use any national instruments of power to challenge its continued influence and expansion.

There were other events linked to al Qaeda that occurred during this period as well. In November 1995, a car bomb exploded outside a joint Saudi-United States facility in Riyadh used for training the Saudi National Guard. Five Americans and two officials from India died. The Saudi government arrested four perpetrators, who admitted to being inspired by bin Laden.<sup>25</sup> Still, there was no significant reaction by the United States; further emboldening al Qaeda. By not reacting, the United States sent a message to other terrorist and extremist groups that acts targeting the United States and its allies will invoke little or no retaliation. Bolder events with links to bin Laden and al Qaeda would continue.

In June 1996, an enormous truck bomb detonated in the Khobar Towers residential complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, that housed U.S. Air Force personnel. Nineteen Americans were killed, and 372 were wounded. While evidence of Iranian involvement is strong, there are also signs that al Qaeda played some role, yet unknown. In this period, other prominent attacks in which Bin Ladin's [sic] involvement is at best cloudy are the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, a plot that same year to destroy landmarks in New York, and the 1995 Manila air plot to blow up a dozen U.S. airliners over the Pacific.<sup>26</sup>

It was clear that the time for United States inaction had passed. The United States decided that it must pressure Sudan to oust bin Laden and al Qaeda from its borders. Allowing al Qaeda and bin Laden to operate with impunity was proving to be disastrous.

The attempted assassination in Ethiopia of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in June 1995 appears to have been a tipping point. The would-be killers, who came from the

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25. National Commission, *The 9-11 Commission Report*, 60.

26. Ibid., 60.

Egyptian Islamic Group, had been sheltered in Sudan and helped by Bin Laden.<sup>27</sup> The United Nations began to exert its own pressure on Sudan. When the Sudanese refused to hand over three individuals identified as involved in the assassination plot, the UN Security Council passed a resolution criticizing their inaction and eventually sanctioned Khartoum in April 1996.<sup>28</sup> These sanctions on Sudan proved to be effective. Finally, the international community, and more specifically the United States and Saudi Arabia, were actively involved and bin Laden was beginning to feel the pressure. Bin Laden began to have serious money problems. International pressure on Sudan, together with strains in the world economy hurt Sudan's currency. Some of Bin Laden's companies ran short of funds. As Sudanese authorities became less obliging, normal costs of doing business increased. Saudi pressures on the Bin Laden family also took a toll.<sup>29</sup> The Sudanese, under pressure from the international community, were prepared to focus inward on their national interests at the expense of the relationship with bin Laden, his growing network, and al Qaeda. They began to take the necessary steps and processes that would lead to the covert departure of bin Laden and his network.

In February 1996, Sudanese officials began approaching officials from the United States and other governments, asking what actions of theirs might ease foreign pressure. Sudan offered to expel Bin Laden to Saudi Arabia. Saudi officials apparently wanted Bin Laden expelled from Sudan. They had already revoked his citizenship, however, would not tolerate his presence in their country. Bin Laden may have no longer felt safe in Sudan, where he had already escaped at least one assassination attempt that he believed to have been the work of the Egyptian or Saudi regimes.

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27. Intelligence Report, Possible *Islamic Army Foreknowledge of an "Egyptian Operation" and Logistical and Security Assistance Provided for the Attackers*, Feb. 13, 1997; FBI report of investigation, interview of Fadl, Nov. 4, 1997.

28. National Commission, *The 9-11 Commission Report*, 62.

29. Ibid.

On May 19, 1996, bin Laden left Sudan—significantly weakened, despite his ambitions and organizational skills.<sup>30</sup>

Bin Laden and al Qaeda made significant strides promoting its ideology and making key alliances during his time in Sudan. These alliances were to be rekindled in the future. For the moment, international pressures from the United Nations, United States, Saudi Arabia, and eventually from Sudan proved effective.

These international pressures dissolved the center of gravity, sanctuary, and freedom of action that bin Laden enjoyed during his years in the Sudan. His organization left Sudan badly damaged. He was desperate for the same freedom of action and impunity he enjoyed in Sudan, and he would find what he was looking for, ironically, in Afghanistan.

The case of al Qaeda in Sudan clearly demonstrates what al Qaeda required to thrive and promote its vision. With freedom of action and international access to other extremist organizations, al Qaeda and bin Laden grew and prospered. Allowing this freedom in the FATA/NWFP will prove disastrous for western powers. The case study also proves that the international community in conjunction with the United States, and its allies can defeat an Al Qaeda center of gravity. Any long-term policy must take into consideration the failures and success of the Sudan case study and apply them to the future.

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30. Ibid ., 62-63.

## **Al Qaeda Center of Gravity in Afghanistan: Pre 9-11**

A look at bin Laden's time in Afghanistan following his departure from Sudan provides a case study that re-enforces the lessons learned from Sudan. The same principles are evident. Those principles are that when bin Laden and al Qaeda operate with impunity, have freedom of action, and are allowed to build alliances and execute their vision, they have the ability to carry their extremist goals to the global commons and threaten global stability. The other principle demonstrated in this study is that when the instruments of national and international power are applied, an al Qaeda center of gravity can be defeated.

Although the United States and its allies denied bin Laden and al Qaeda the center of gravity in Sudan, they grossly underestimated how the next move would play out. The Clinton administration underestimated the potential ramifications of allowing bin Laden to access Afghanistan again. Bin Laden's journey back to Afghanistan would allow him to reestablish ties and relationships from the Afghan-Russian war.

State Department analysts warned the Clinton administration in July 1996 that Osama bin Laden's move to Afghanistan would give him an even more dangerous haven as he sought to expand radical Islam well beyond the Middle East. State Department intelligence analysts said in a top-secret assessment on bin Laden that "his prolonged stay in Afghanistan - where hundreds of 'Arab mujahedeen' receive terrorist training and key extremist leaders often congregate - could prove more dangerous to U.S. interests in the long run than his three-year liaison with Khartoum," in Sudan. The State Department assessment said Afghanistan would make an "ideal haven" for bin Laden to run his financial networks and attract support from radicalized Muslims. Moreover, his considerable freedom to travel with little fear of being intercepted or tracked will embolden bin Laden making him capable of "increased terrorism." Two years after the State Department's warning, with bin Laden firmly entrenched in Afghanistan and overseeing terrorist training and financing operations, Al Qaeda struck two American embassies in East Africa, leading to failed military attempts by the Clinton administration to capture or kill him in Afghanistan. Three

years later, on Sept. 11, 2001, Al Qaeda struck the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in an operation overseen from the base in Afghanistan.<sup>31</sup>

Allowing bin Laden to regain freedom of action in Afghanistan, even after his weakened organization left Sudan demonstrates al Qaeda's resilience. This resiliency demonstrates that bin Laden and al Qaeda will not waiver on their vision. They will always seek to reestablish and build alliances, recruit new members, and strike globally against the United States and its allies.

The African embassy bombings were to be the first real tests of America's resolve to apply its elements of national power to combat the new center of gravity that bin Laden had established in Afghanistan. The August 7, 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya killed 224 people, including 12 Americans, and injured thousands.<sup>32</sup> The next event that would embolden bin Laden and al Qaeda would be the attack on the USS Cole. This highly successful attack in the Port of Aden against a symbol of American power and prestige placed the Clinton administration in a dilemma. With no long-term policy to contain bin Laden and al Qaeda, the credibility of the administration to deal with these types of terrorist attacks and demonstrate resolve was in question.

Both of these attacks were designed to measure the reaction of the U.S. In each case, the Clinton administration consistently declined to engage, making essentially symbolic responses to the attacks, using cruise missiles to hit inessential targets. The Clinton administration was caught on the horns of the dilemma. If it did not respond, al Qaeda's credibility would rise in the Islamic world. If it did respond, it would set in motion the

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31. Eric Lichtblau, "State Dept. Says It Warned about bin Laden in 1996" *New York Time.com*, August 17, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/17/international/asia/17osama.html> [last accessed, 14 March 2010].

32. Phil Hirschorn, "Embassy bombings Trial Informant names Alleged Conspirators," *CNN.com*. February 2001. <http://www.edition.cnn.com/2001/LAW/02/06/embassy.bombings.04/index.html>

process that al Qaeda hoped. Clinton compromised by responding ineffectively, hoping to find a midpoint that would neither inflame the Islamic world nor allow al Qaeda's credibility to escalate. There was no sweet spot that would achieve both goals and the result would make the Clinton administration appear less competent than it was.<sup>33</sup>

In August of 1998, President Clinton authorized a series of both "overt and covert" measures targeting bin Laden.<sup>34</sup> While President Clinton and his senior advisors were prepared to use greater force against the terrorist threat, the military service and intelligence community were dragging their feet. This was in part due to the previous military embarrassments in the hostage rescue attempt in Iran and the downing of a Blackhawk helicopter in Somalia.<sup>35</sup> There were some efforts to align with the Afghan Northern Alliance to enable the Central Intelligence Agency and special operations forces to capture bin Laden while he was moving in a vehicle convoy, although this never occurred. These efforts made the administration feel as though they were doing everything possible, but this was not the fact. The reality was that the center of gravity that bin Laden desired in Saudi Arabia and experienced in the Sudan re-emerged in Afghanistan. The facts since bin Laden had arrived in Afghanistan in 1996 were clear:

Short of war, the United States was powerless to stop him. He was safe with the Taliban, and the Americans were reduced to trying to enlist their Pakistani allies to prevail on their Taliban friends to hand him over. That was a mug's game since the Pakistanis had heavily invested in the Taliban in pursuance of their dream of using their western neighbor as strategic depth against India. Bin Laden was taking full advantage of American impotence, churning out thousands of jihadis in various Afghan training

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33. George Friedman, *America's Secret War: Inside the Hidden Worldwide Struggle between America and Its Enemies* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 38.

34. Daugherty, *Executive Secrets*, 219.

35. Melvin A. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 188.

camps. Many ended up as cannon fodder, but a minority received instruction in the dark arts of terrorism and dispatched worldwide.<sup>36</sup>

Some in this minority group would become the core of the 9-11 hijackers and execute a covert operation within the United State's borders. Their story is well known and culminated in the attacks of 9-11. The greater point is that a lack of active United States policy during this period focused on defeating bin Laden in Afghanistan enabled training and indoctrination of this minority group and many others in the al Qaeda training camps. This policy failure led to the events of 9-11.

## **Conclusion**

The United States made serious strategic and policy miscalculations during the period following the Afghan-Russian war. These range from turning our backs on Pakistan and Afghanistan, to failing to understand the threat and strategic vision that al Qaeda and bin Laden posed to United States as well as international security, and being averse to taking action to combat the terrorist threat by other than strategic targeting with missiles. A clear pattern had developed in regards to the utilization of America's instruments of national power to contain al Qaeda and bin Laden.

With unimpeded freedom of action and a center of gravity, al Qaeda flourishes. These conditions were denied in Saudi Arabia and resulted in bin Laden's departure. A brief return to Pakistan and Afghanistan proved fruitless; the Mujahedeen had reverted to pre-Afghan-Russian war tribal and clan conflicts. There was no appetite for bin Laden's vision, and he was forced to move on.

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36. Randal, *Osama: The Making of a Terrorist*, 127.

The story was different in Sudan. Bin Laden's newfound center of gravity enabled al Qaeda's growth. Not until the United States and the international community applied their instruments of power did the Sudanese government act. Bin Laden weakened and was forced again to seek freedom of action elsewhere. Bin Laden was at his weakest point upon his departure from Sudan, but with the new Taliban government in control in Afghanistan, he gained the base he needed to continue his vision. The fact of the matter was that, until 9-11, there was a bureaucratic hesitation throughout the United States government as well as the military hierarchy about taking strong action on terrorism. In late 1998-1999, the Pentagon launched air attacks against Iraq, but there was unwillingness to bomb targets in Afghanistan where bin Laden had his latest center of gravity.<sup>37</sup>

Another sign the United States failed to take seriously was that bin Laden formally declared war on the United States in 1996. In this fatwa he states:

By God's grace we have formed with many other Islamic groups and organizations in the Islamic world a front called the International Islamic Front to do jihad against the Crusaders and Jews, and by God's grace the men are going to have a successful result in killing Americans and getting rid of them.<sup>38</sup>

All saw this declaration come to fruition through events discussed in this chapter culminating with the attacks on 9-11.

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37. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence*, 187.

38. Nic Robertson, "Previously Unseen Tape Shows bin Laden's Declaration of War," *CNN.com*. August 20, 2002 <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/US/08/19/terror.tape.main/>.

## CHAPTER 4

### **D-I-M-E EFFORTS DENYING BIN LADEN AND AL QAEDA CENTERS OF GRAVITY (POST 9-11)**

#### **Introduction:**

The attacks of 9-11 represent the culmination of what al Qaeda had learned in almost ten years of attacks against the United States. The horrific multiple attacks were the organization's supreme operation, meticulously planned and carefully executed. They had achieved an unprecedented level of sophistication.<sup>1</sup> It was no longer a question of 'if' but 'how' the United States would apply a whole of government approach against the safe havens the Taliban had provided bin Laden and al Qaeda. The time for indecisiveness and bureaucratic ineptitude had passed. The United States had to act, and it had to act decisively.

Acting decisively in Afghanistan presented a challenge. Access was limited and history demonstrated that invading forces would not have success in the country. On the evening of 9-11, President Bush met with the National Security Council. The President's guidance was clear. He stated that it was a time for self-defense. The United States would punish not just the perpetrators of the attacks, but also those who harbored them. Secretary Powell said the United States had to make it clear to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Arab states that the time to act was now. He said we would need to build a coalition.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Steven Emerson, *Jihad Incorporated: A Guide to Militant Islam in the U.S.* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2006), 46.

2. National Commission, *The 9-11 Commission Report*, 330.

This chapter will examine how the United States applied its national instruments of power with its Allies; and how these tools effectively removed the Taliban regime and defeated the al Qaeda center of gravity in Afghanistan. It also examines subsequent events following the dramatic Taliban defeat where the United States failed reinforce this success. This eventually weakened the United States' initial gains after 9-11. The discussion will focus on how the Taliban, bin Laden and al Qaeda were able to escape back to the safe haven of the FATA/ NWFP where they were to regroup. As demonstrated in the earlier case studies of pre 9-11 Sudan and Afghanistan, when provided a safe haven, bin Laden has a history of effectively regrouping. Bin Laden and al Qaeda had once again found their center of gravity in the FATA/ NWFP. Nonetheless, the United States and its allies failed to realize that bin Laden and al Qaeda found a new safe haven. This failure would again embolden bin Laden, al Qaeda, and provide a base to continue promoting the worldwide network of Islamist extremist views.

### **Afghanistan (Post 9-11)**

The invasion of Afghanistan after 9-11 serves as the model for the whole of government approach utilizing all of the United States' national instruments of power. In the diplomatic arena, gaining Pakistani support would be critical since the ISI and the Pakistani government supported the Taliban since they had come to power. The State Department engaged this immediately.

Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage met with the Pakistani ambassador to the United States, Maleeha Lodhi, and the visiting head of Pakistan's military intelligence service, Mahmud Ahmed. Armitage said that the United States wanted Pakistan to take seven steps:

- To stop al Qaeda operatives at its border and end all logistical support for Bin Laden;
- To give the United States blanket over flight and landing rights for all necessary military and intelligence operations;
- To provide territorial access to U.S. and allied military intelligence and other personnel to conduct operations against al Qaeda;
- To provide the United States with intelligence information;
- To continue to publicly condemn the terrorist acts;
- To cut off all shipments of fuel to the Taliban and stop recruits from going to Afghanistan; and,
- If the evidence implicated bin Laden and al Qaeda and the Taliban continued to harbor them, to break relations with the Taliban government.<sup>3</sup>

This support would be a major first step in the post 9-11 world and would demonstrate United States diplomatic power in the region.

Pakistan made its decision swiftly. That afternoon, Secretary of State Powell announced at the beginning of a National Security Council (NSC) meeting that Pakistani President Musharraf had agreed to every U.S. request for support in the war on terrorism. The next day, the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad confirmed that Musharraf and his top military commanders had agreed to all seven demands. The State department continued its efforts and the next target was to gain Russian support.<sup>4</sup>

Armitage went to Russia to gain access to Russian intelligence and access to the Northern Alliance. The United States also needed access to bases in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and requested Soviet approval. The Russians decided they would align with the American struggle against al Qaeda, but they wanted to United States to halt its public

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3. DOS cable, State 158711, “Deputy Secretary Armitage’s Meeting with General Mahmud: Actions and Support Expected of Pakistan in Fight Against Terrorism,” Sept. 14, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Friedman, *America’s Secret War*, 143,147.

criticism of Soviet actions in Chechnya.<sup>5</sup> This diplomatic victory gave the United States the key bases for staging and launching forces against the Taliban. The United States eventually gained support from another unlikely partner, Iran.<sup>6</sup>

The Russians were the necessary piece because of the access they gave to the Northern Alliance, but they were not sufficient. The United States wanted the Iranians to cut off the Afghan-Iranian border to guarantee that al Qaeda did not escape. Second, they wanted the Iranian intelligence to provide support to the United States in hunting for al Qaeda. Third, they wanted the Iranians to cut off aid to Hezbollah and any other group the United States identified as terrorist. Finally, they wanted the Iranians to make sure that no financial support was coming through to al Qaeda from Iran. The United States was going to invade Afghanistan. Regardless of what Iran said, the United States would take whatever terms were offered. The Iranian response was that they would work on the ground with the United States as long as autonomy was respected (Iran had forces on the ground supporting the Shiites) Iran agreed that al Qaeda was a threat to both countries and agreed to control the borders. Iran made no agreement on intelligence sharing and rejected halting aid to anti-Israeli groups.<sup>7</sup>

Through diligent and effective diplomatic efforts, the United States had the Pakistanis, and Russians along with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Iranians on board with its agenda.

The President himself invoked the United States information tools. On Sept 20, 2001, the President addressed a joint session of Congress and the American people, but his message targeted a much broader audience: the international community. He used the United States' information tools brilliantly.

On behalf of the American people, I thank the world for its outpouring of support. America will never forget the sounds of our National anthem playing at Buckingham Palace, on the streets of Paris, and at Berlin's Brandenburg gate. We will not forget South Korean children gathering to pray outside our Embassy, or the prayers of sympathy offered at a mosque

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 143,147.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 159,160.

7. Ibid., 159-160.

in Cairo. We will not forget the moments of silence and days of mourning in Australia, Africa, and Latin America. Nor will we forget the citizens of 80 other Nations who died with our own: dozens of Pakistanis; more than 130 Israelis, more than 250 citizens from India, men and women from El Salvador, Iran, Mexico and Japan; and hundreds of British citizens. . . . Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime.” Afghanistan’s people have been brutalized. The United States respects the people of Afghanistan, but we condemn the Taliban regime. . . . I want to speak directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. Its teachings are good and peaceful. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our Muslim or Arab friends, it is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them. . . . Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda and won’t stop until every terrorist group of Global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.<sup>8</sup>

With the strategic information message delivered, now it was time for the military tool.

The nagging question remained how the United States would be able to be successful in Afghanistan where other nations had not. Al Qaeda believed it had created the perfect situation. The United States could not ignore September 11, but it could not take Afghanistan. The most the United States could do was move insufficient forces to Afghanistan and then become hopelessly bogged down. Al Qaeda thinking was that, in the end, the United States did not have the ability to impose a solution on Afghanistan and the Taliban would remain in power.<sup>9</sup> Bin Laden felt no threat to his center of gravity and was not worried about any American military achieving success.

The Taliban and al Qaeda were quite sophisticated about fighting wars against major powers. They had fought the Russians, and studied U.S. operations in the Persian Gulf. The Taliban and al Qaeda were counting on the United States needing a country that would provide a base of operations because the United States depended heavily on armored forces, which required ports and transport to border countries. They knew that

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8. United States. *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001* (Department of State Publication, 10940. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of State, Office of the Secretary of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 2002), 133-135.

9. Friedman, *America’s Secret Wars*, 174.

neither Iran nor Pakistan would allow the United States to base the hundreds of thousands of troops needed to invade Afghanistan, and the Russian train system would not allow that to happen very quickly. If the United States was to base in Iran or Pakistan, they would have to invade or occupy one of those countries which would play right into what al Qaeda hoped the United States would do: make war on multiple Islamic countries simultaneously. The United States fully understood this analysis, and understood the fundamental obstacles in invading Afghanistan. The United States knew they had to depend on the Northern Alliance.<sup>10</sup>

The relationship between the United States and the Northern Alliance seemed an unlikely solution to the mutual goals to overthrow the Taliban and deny al Qaeda freedom of action and a center of gravity. Although unlikely, it proved to be one of the most successful alliances in military history and a model for SOF and CIA integration with an indigenous force.

As demonstrated with the diplomatic and information tools, the military and inter-agency response following 9-11 would be complementary. It was not going to be the massive conventional force that was going to topple the Taliban regime, and strip al Qaeda of its center of gravity. It was going to be an unconventional group of CIA and Special Forces operatives' operating de-centralized with the same freedom of action that its Taliban and al Qaeda adversaries employed. This was not the fight that the Taliban or al Qaeda expected.

The speedy success of the war in Afghanistan took most people by surprise, including many of our leaders in Washington. According to Bob Woodward in his book *Bush at War*, it took little more than two months, with 110 CIA officers and 350 Special Forces soldiers allied with 15,000 Northern and Eastern Alliance Afghans and supported by more than 100 combat sorties per day, to defeat a Taliban army estimated at 50,000 to 60,000 plus several thousand al Qaeda fighters. New York Times reported that as many as 8,000 to 12,000 Taliban soldiers were killed and another

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10. Ibid., 173-175.

7,000 or more were taken prisoner. In addition, 4000 to 5000 al Qaeda fighters either perished or were taken prisoner. The Brookings Institute concluded that: "It (the Afghan war) may wind up being more notable in the annals of American history than anything since Douglas MacArthur's invasion at Inchon in Korea a half century ago."<sup>11</sup>

This use of the United States military tool is well documented and will go down as one of the most audacious and unexpected examples of military success in history.

The next national instrument of power employed would be economic. Al Qaeda and bin Laden relied heavily on financial contributions to fund its operation. As previously discussed, there were many contributors, and these combined with bin Laden's own individual wealth and prominence were crucial to the sustainment of al Qaeda. This pipeline needed to be disrupted. On Sept 25 Sept 2001, President Bush took action in conjunction with the Department of Treasury:

A strike on the financial foundation of the global terror network began by freezing Osama bin Laden's American assets and threatening action against foreign banks that do not follow suit. The goal was to starve the terrorists of funding. Money is the lifeblood of terrorist operations. The White House message was that al Qaeda and other terrorist groups could be stopped only by a coordinated, multinational campaign that uses financial and diplomatic weapons in addition to military forces. The U.S. would work with their governments and ask them to block terrorist ability to access funds in foreign accounts. The US Treasury will set up an asset-tracking center to identify and investigate the financial infrastructures of terrorist networks. Paul O'Neill, the US treasury secretary said: If you have any involvement in the financing of the al Qaeda organization, you have two choices: co-operate in this fight or we will freeze your US assets.<sup>12</sup>

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11. Gary C. Schroen, *First in: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Presidio Press/Ballantine Books, 2005), 312-313.

12. Toby Harnden, "We'll Starve the Murderers of Cash Says Bush" *Telegraph.com* 25 Sept 2001. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1341569/Well-starve-the-murderers-of-cash-says-Bush.html>.

There were initial examples of success along all of the DIME elements. The problem was that after initial short-term success, the United States slipped back into a pre-9-11 bureaucratic mode and failed to capitalize on the success and follow through with long-term vision. In the short term, the U.S. and its allies denied al Qaeda and bin Laden its center of gravity, ousted the Taliban from power, achieved diplomatic agreements in the region, and worked to deny al Qaeda its financial backing. Unfortunately, as occurred through the Soviet-Afghan war, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, the U.S. underestimated and failed to understand the resiliency of bin Laden and al Qaeda – even when they were at their weakest. The U.S. let bin Laden escape Afghanistan and slip back to the familiar surroundings of the FATA/NWFP.

### **Bin Laden Escapes to the FATA/NWFP (Post 9-11)**

The current situation in the FATA/NWFP provides an interesting case study on how bin Laden and al Qaeda escaped from Afghanistan, established a center of gravity in the FATA/NWFP region, and continued to promote his influence worldwide. While not on the scale of the freedom of action enjoyed by al Qaida in Afghanistan through the late 1990's, it enabled the movement to redevelop its existing connections to like-minded groups across the world and enhance new links.<sup>13</sup> This case study again demonstrates the resiliency of bin Laden and al Qaeda. Following the 9-11 attacks and the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, al Qaeda and bin Laden pulled back into the borderland between

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13. Rogers, *Why Were Losing the war on Terror*, 132.

Afghanistan and Pakistan and have not left. The United States was quick to enlist Pakistan as an ally in its war against al Qaeda and its supporters in the border area.<sup>14</sup>

Although many factors are to blame for bin Laden's escape across the border and back into Pakistan, three failures stand out. First, the United States failed to anticipate and deny escape routes from Afghanistan to the FATA/NWFP safe haven. Second, the United States failed to understand the psyche of the Afghan militia and their loyalty to Bin Laden. Third, as analyzed in previous case studies in this thesis, the United States again failed to appreciate the resiliency of al Qaeda and underestimated their ability to reestablish themselves. These three areas are important to highlight because of their applicability in determining a coherent long-term policy for the FATA/NWFP today.

Bin Laden was able to escape Afghanistan just when the United States had him in their sights. United States leaders thought that they had bin Laden and al Qaeda leadership holed-up at Tora Bora in the White Mountains that straddle the border with Pakistan. Reluctant to put too many Americans troops on the ground, U.S. commanders relied on their Afghan allies backed up by Special Forces to snare bin Laden and his henchmen.<sup>15</sup> There is much debate on why the United States failed to place the required number of troops to block the escape routes into Pakistan. Why the Pentagon failed to put the Tenth Mountain Division's 'boots on the ground' from the start remains unclear. The Pentagon has avoided explaining its reasoning. However, a desire to avoid American casualties, and a habit of micromanaging even the smallest deployments from

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15. Sean Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda* (New York: Berkley Books, 2005), 10.

Washington apparently counted heavily in the decision-making.<sup>16</sup> Relying on the Afghan militias had proved successful up to this point in the toppling of the Taliban regime. However, when it came to capturing bin Laden, America's faith in the militias was misplaced, and a failure to block the escape routes into Pakistan from Tora Bora meant that bin Laden and hundreds of al Qaeda fighters had slipped the net.<sup>17</sup>

This failure to block the escape route for bin Laden is comparable to the United States policy of allowing bin Laden to escape back to Afghanistan following his departure from Sudan. All the indicators pointed to the fact that the FATA/NWFP was a safe haven where al Qaeda had historical ties and sympathy from the tribes inhabiting the area. The United States failed to recognize and appreciate this history. No American soldiers, not even the specially trained Delta Force, were committed to block the retreating al Qaeda units on their way to sanctuary in nearby Pakistan.<sup>18</sup> An explanation of this colossal tactical failure appears to originate from the highest levels of the Department of Defense based on a strategic message, not a military objective. The results of this decision proved disastrous.

He [Rumsfeld] used the Afghan campaign to demonstrate his conviction that U.S. military thinking remained mired in the big divisions arrayed against a defunct Soviet Union of the defunct Cold War. The army especially badly needed a revolutionary shaking up. Rumsfeld's reliance on lightly armed Special Forces units working with Northern Alliance militiamen and air power was meant as a lesson for the tradition-bound American army.<sup>19</sup>

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16. Randall, *Osama, The Making of a Terrorist*, 256.

17. Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die*, 10.

18. Randall, *Osama, The Making of a Terrorist*, 256.

19. Ibid., 256-257.

The failure to recognize loyalties among the tribes and militia proved a major factor as well. The militia commanders, it was said, were Pashtuns who had known Osama since the 1980's and shared their Pakistani cousins' affection for him. Bin Laden's presence in Tora Bora and his 'miraculous escape' from American firepower only added to his stature.<sup>20</sup> A recent Senate Foreign Relation Committee report validates the argument that the United States failed to pursue bin Laden and his al Qaeda soldiers following the U.S.-led invasion in Afghanistan after 9-11.

Removing the al Qaeda leader from the battlefield eight years ago would not have eliminated the worldwide extremist threat the committee's report concludes. However, the decisions that opened the door for his escape to Pakistan allowed bin Laden to emerge as a potent symbolic figure who continues to attract a steady flow of money and inspire fanatics worldwide.<sup>21</sup>

The result complicated the situation the United States faces today in determining policy to contain bin Laden and Islamic extremist worldwide.

### **Conclusions**

The United States must study the failures of the post 9-11 invasion of Afghanistan. The case studies in this chapter highlight al Qaeda's resiliency and the deep cultural and tribal ties and loyalty they experience in the region. They also validate the perception of bin Laden as a folk hero that uses this stature to gain support, and that when allowed to operate with impunity he is able to promote his vision. These key enablers exist in the safe haven and center of gravity that bin Laden and al Qaeda currently exploit

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20. Ibid.

21. Scott Shane, "Report Details Failure to Capture bin Laden," November 29, 2009, [http://articles.sfgate.com/2009-11-29/news/17180206\\_1\\_bin-caves-troops](http://articles.sfgate.com/2009-11-29/news/17180206_1_bin-caves-troops). (last accessed 24 Feb.2010)

in the FATA/NWFP. The recurring problem is the United States has a short-term view of al Qaeda even in the post 9-11 era. In addition, the United States determined the center of gravity in Afghanistan to be the Taliban regime, thinking that toppling it would result in stability. This short-term strategic thinking proved incorrect. Any long-term policy and plans should focus on securing the population, promoting economic stability, and denying Taliban and al Qaeda influence. The same is required in the FATA/NWFP.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper demonstrates that al Qaeda is not going to dissolve in the FATA/NWFP. Many that have embraced its fanatical vision perceive al Qaeda with reverence. Historical case studies demonstrate that al Qaeda centers of gravity can be defeated. This thesis proves that the only way to defeat al Qaeda centers of gravity is through application of the full suite of the United States' national instruments of power through a comprehensive whole of government approach, supported by international cooperation. Long-term policy must focus on not only defeating the al Qaeda center of gravity in the FATA/NWFP, but also on denying the effective displacement of this resilient organization.

Recommendations to defeat and deny the al Qaeda center of gravity in the FATA/NWFP require coherent policies and actions across diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) elements of national power to achieve victory.

Diplomatic: The case studies in this paper demonstrate that diplomacy can be successful in denying al Qaeda centers of gravity. Working in conjunction with other nations and through the United Nations proved successful. Diplomacy proved successful in Saudi Arabia and the Sudan in the case studies presented.

- The U.S. must reassure its international partners that it will not abandon Pakistan in the fight against Islamic extremism in the FATA/NWFP and within its borders.

- The United States must endear itself to the region through its diplomatic efforts. That will translate over time into regional partnership and cooperation.
- Furthermore, The United States must re-build and nurture a trust-based long-term relationship with Pakistan. For the strategic goals of the United States to have success in the FATA/NWFP, as well as the region, they must garner the trust of the Pakistanis.
- The U.S. must not focus policy on the premise that others must do more. A formal diplomatic coalition should be developed to combat extremism with other regional players which builds on and creates awareness on the success stories combating extremism throughout the region, not just in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- The U.S. must educate the region that the FATA/NWFP is not a Pakistani problem, but a regional and international problem.
- The U.S. must focus diplomatic efforts on encouraging the Pakistanis to normalize the governance of the FATA/NWFP. Empowering the tribal elders and Mullahs with more of a stake in the future of Pakistan is imperative. Consider dissolving antiquated agreements that stemmed from the Durand Line agreement. Focus diplomatic efforts on convincing the Pakistani government that the population of the FATA/NWFP is the center of gravity, and their long-term support of the government is the solution to denying al Qaeda and Islamic extremists a center of gravity.

Long-term policy should focus diplomacy on these key areas, but there are many more. Denying al Qaeda its center of gravity will involve the application of soft power. Long-term diplomacy efforts should have regional players leading efforts in the FATA/NWFP, with the United States in the supporting role.

Informational: Long-term informational and strategic communication policy must focus on changing the perceptions that the Americans are crusaders, infidels, and invaders who will turn their back on you once they have achieved their strategic goals. The case studies discussed in this thesis validate this premise in the region, and undoubtedly in Pakistan. Two areas the informational tool must focus on in denying al Qaeda its center of gravity in the FATA/NWFP include regulating the madrassas; and, regulating the strategic information campaign al Qaeda promulgates.

- The U.S. and its partners must encourage and work with the government of Pakistan to regulate, standardize, and validate all madrassas in the FATA/NWFP.
- We must continue to work hard with Pakistan to provide educational opportunities that rival the extremism taught in some madrassas.
- The U.S. must develop a strategic information campaign to educate other regional players on the agenda of extremist madrassas and the impact they have in the development of terrorists.
- Many captured al Qaeda and other extremist interrogation reports trace the detainee's indoctrination into extremist views to the education received at their madrassa. The U.S. must focus on ensuring regional awareness to

this problem and discourage nations from sending anyone to Pakistan to attend madrassa unless validated by the Pakistani government.

- Al Qaeda and other extremist groups do not play by the same strategic communication rules. The ability to influence and stymie the strategic information message of al Qaeda will degrade the al Qaeda network inside and outside the FATA/NWFP, and weaken the organizational structure.
- The United States must improve its long-term image in the region. The solution is to work through Pakistan and the regional players.
- The United States must understand Pakistan's perception of abandonment and be sensitive to this in establishing future long-term policy to deny al Qaeda and Islamist extremists a center of gravity in the FATA/NWFP.

Improving the United States image requires education that the threat to regional stability is al Qaeda and Islamic extremists, not the U.S. Additionally, the United States' long-term policy must focus on attaining authorities to combat the strategic information campaign plan of al Qaeda to deny their access to the extremist network of networks worldwide.

Military: Long-term policy will involve the military instrument of national power. The military application will look much different in the region than it does today. The President recently made the decision to send more troops to Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> This is not open ended and timelines were set for the withdrawal of American forces. Long-term

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Garamone, "More Campbell Troops to Deploy to Afghanistan," *Defense.gov*. Feb 2, 2010. <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=57836>.

military policy must involve interaction and cooperation with the Pakistanis and the Afghans. Large-scale military options will cease to exist when the timelines set for withdrawal arrive. Long-term military policy and strategy will focus on smaller scale military options that should include:

- Special Forces teams collaborating with the Afghans and Pakistanis that focus on training and developing the military and building capability to lead efforts against extremism.
- National level interagency assets focused on monitoring the FATA/NWFP collaborating with the Pakistanis. These assets must retain the capability to strike against high value targets (HVT) in the FATA/NWFP, and throughout the region.
- Long-term military policy in the FATA/NWFP has DOD in a supporting role focused on collaboration instead of unilateral action. Pakistanis must be supported as the main effort and any military action in the FATA/NWFP must have the Pakistanis in the lead.

To be clear, the United States cannot solve the problems presented in the FATA/NWFP province using military power alone. However, the long-term policy and strategy discussed earlier places DOD in an effective supporting role that is complimentary to the whole of government approach. This is the only chance for success.

Economic: Exposing bin Laden's financial and economic structure will be the most challenging task and will require the most patience.

- The U.S. must focus on denying al Qaeda and bin Laden access to funds and holdings, as well as the systems whereby donations are received.

These systems involve money laundering activities, non-profit organizations, cover companies, and sympathizers, just to name a few.

- Efforts to deny bin Laden access to these funds must be re-invigorated. As demonstrated in the Sudan case study, international sanctions weaken bin Laden and al Qaeda holdings.
- Long-term economic policy to deny al Qaeda a center of gravity in the FATA/NWFP should renew international partnerships involved in the investigation of the origins of contributions and donations. This must be a coalition effort headed up by the United States and include Middle Eastern countries that have financial institutions that have historical ties to al Qaeda.
- This coalition must focus efforts on historical case studies that detail how bin Laden and other extremist organizations finance themselves. In many cases, financial organizations are ignorant to the fact that they even have holdings associated with extremist groups. Coalition efforts must review and revise the legal parameters that may protect al Qaeda financial activities and money laundering activities.

Exposure of al Qaeda fronts, cover companies as well as nonprofit organizations that facilitate the movement and transfer of funds for al Qaeda. Exposing and disrupting bin Laden and al Qaeda's financial network presents massive challenges. Some might argue that exposing al Qaeda's financial network is impossible. However, not making the effort to expose it could be catastrophic. Al Qaeda has its own economy, and like any other entity, without a strong economy, its organization would suffer.

## CONCLUSION

As introduced earlier in this thesis, the Obama administration is facing a unique set of short and long-term challenges ranging from health care, the economy, to fighting two separate COIN wars. The United States people hear about these important issues every day through the news networks, newspapers, internet, and other information mediums. If you walked up to an average person on the street and asked them what the important issues are that America faces today, they would mention many of the same issues above. Then if you asked them, what is long-term national security issue associated with FATA/NWFP, a majority would not have any awareness of the threat emanating from this region.

This is eerily similar to the rise of bin Laden through the 1990s. Some Americans today are aware that un-manned drones are firing Hellfire missiles into Pakistan targeting al Qaeda and Taliban. Similarly, some were aware in the 1990's that the United States fired Tomahawk missiles targeting bin Laden and his training camps in the Sudan and Afghanistan. In the 1990's, news of such attacks made people feel satisfied that bin Laden and al Qaeda were contained, and Americans focused on other important issues of the day. Ironically, today, when Americans read in the paper or hear on the news about a missile attack somewhere in Pakistan, they also feel that al Qaeda and extremist groups are again being contained. This is a false sense of security that is troubling. Such a false sense of security led to events such as 9-11, and if al Qaeda is not challenged today with an effective whole of government approach using all instruments of national power, catastrophes will occur in the future.

Al Qaeda's vision focuses on the destruction of the United States as an institution, and al Qaeda is an organization that is determined and patient. Although they operate decentralized, they must have and maintain a center of gravity from which to operate in order to carry out their vision. Successful operations against United States' interests only occurred when al Qaeda operated with impunity with a center of gravity in a rogue country. Additionally, as demonstrated through the various case studies in this thesis, when the United States and its allies defeated and denied those centers of gravity, al Qaeda became much less effective. However, today al Qaeda has a center of gravity and operates with impunity in a rogue region of Pakistan known as the FATA/NWFP. The conditions are set for future catastrophic events against the United States, its interests, and its allies. Inaction to deny this center of gravity by the United States, its allies, and the international community will only embolden and strengthen al Qaeda in their quest for future operations.

The United States' credibility is at stake in this region. The United States must not repeat the mistakes of the past in dealing with al Qaeda and Islamic extremism in the FATA/NWFP. They must not let al Qaeda become emboldened through inaction. They must establish a long-term vision to defeat al Qaeda and translate that vision into a coherent long-term policy for the FATA/NWFP. They must not turn their back on the region and particularly Pakistan and become isolationist. They must build an international coalition to combat al Qaeda and extremism focusing on a whole of government approach using all national instruments of power, not just military. Long-term global stability is at stake. The first victory in this long-term fight is denying al Qaeda and Islamic extremism its center of gravity in the FATA/NWFP.

## EPILOGUE

This thesis demonstrates that in order to deny Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda the ability to promote their vision of a global Islamic caliphate and execute terrorist acts, one must first deny them a center of gravity. For the purposes of this thesis, a center of gravity is a base such as the FATA/NWFP or sympathetic country such as the Sudan in the 1990's from which al Qaeda operates with impunity. The case studies analyzed throughout this thesis demonstrate that when the United States, in conjunction with their international partners and allies, applies a comprehensive whole of government approach, this impunity is challenged and denied. Al Qaeda is an organization that demonstrates patience and is very resilient. Their resiliency is much different from that of any conventional enemy the United States may face in the future. Their resiliency revolves around an ideology and national borders cannot contain it. In fact, al Qaeda has no respect for any territorial border. They do not differentiate between the Islamic world and western society. In order to achieve this vision they will operate wherever they can. In addition, as long as the United States and its allies allow al Qaeda freedom of action, they will remain a threat to global stability.

In October of 2001, the author had the privilege to participate in some of the initial efforts against the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan following the attacks of 9-11. During that time, some very high-ranking members of the Senate Armed Service committee visited our unit. They wanted to see firsthand the initial efforts our nation was taking against the supporters and perpetrators of the 9-11 attacks. During this visit, two of the members asked me what I thought about our actions, the enemy, and the way ahead.

My answer was that I thought the action was appropriate, that the enemy underestimated the resiliency and courage of the American service member, and the way ahead was simple. I defined simple as this adversary understood two things when it came to warfare, which was pressure and pain. Both of the members smiled and asked me to explain further. I defined pressure and pain as taking the fight to the enemy relentlessly both militarily as well as diplomatically and economically. The enemy must understand the United States would not relent until they were certain the enemy would not again consider an attack on the United States or its allies. Although caught up in the moment as we all were at the time, both men enthusiastically agreed.

Thinking back on that encounter and then having the opportunity to research and examine what is critical for al Qaeda's survival through this thesis, the answer is no different. The United States and its allies must constantly apply pressure and ensure that al Qaeda and bin Laden feel the pain of that pressure. The good news is that the United States and its allies have demonstrated success in applying pressure and pain to al Qaeda as demonstrated in this thesis. The challenge now is how to capitalize on success with a long-term policy and strategic vision. This is one of the most important issues the United States faces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The al Qaeda threat as well as Islamic extremism are not going away. It is incumbent upon our generation to take this issue on and not leave it for future generations to solve. The only solution is a comprehensive whole of government approach using all of the tools of national power, synchronized with our international partners throughout the globe. Al Qaeda is much like the bully on the block. The bully will continue to prosper and intimidate as long as his freedom of action is not threatened.

However, when someone stands up to that bully and denies his freedom of action, he will run away and try to find another area or group in which he can operate with impunity. As demonstrated in this thesis, al Qaeda is much the same as the bully. As such, the United States must take a long-term vision, develop the associated policy, and make sure the al Qaeda bully is defeated globally.

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## VITA

Colonel Van J. Voorhees Jr. is an Army Aviation officer with 22 years of service. He has served in various command and staff positions throughout his career including assignments at Ft. Rucker Alabama, Ft. Bragg North Carolina, Ft. Hood Texas, Seoul Korea, Ft. Eustis Virginia, and Ft. Campbell Kentucky. Prior to attending the Joint Advanced War Fighter School, Colonel Voorhees most recent assignment was Commander, 1st Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) Airborne. Colonel Voorhees is a combat veteran of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, served in Bosnia, and has numerous tours in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Colonel Voorhees undergraduate degree is from Elon College, North Carolina and he holds a Masters degree in General Administration from Central Michigan University. He is a graduate of the United States Army Flight School, the Aviation Officers Basic and Advance Courses, the United States Army Ranger School, Airborne School, Jumpmaster School, Army Air Assault School, Army Freefall Course, Command and General Staff College, and the Joint Advanced War Fighter School. Colonel Voorhees is qualified in over 13 rotary wing aircraft. Colonel Voorhees has numerous awards and decorations to include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star with 2 Oak Leaf Cluster, and Air medal with numeral two. Colonel Voorhees is married to the former Joyce Jones of Virginia Beach, Virginia and he has a sixteen-year-old daughter Hailey and fifteen-year-old son Jake. Colonel Voorhees next assignment is Commander, 12th Combat Aviation Brigade Katterbach Germany